

Is history repeating itself in Venezuela?

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The Trump administration's January 3, 2026 attack on Venezuela and the kidnapping of its president and his wife, extraditing them to the United States to face drug trafficking charges, is just the latest chapter in [the long history of U.S. intervention in Latin America](#) [a.k.a. Abya Yala]. Beginning with the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, the U.S. has viewed the Western Hemisphere as its exclusive preserve, often thwarting the dreams and aspirations of local populations.

In [a recent article published in The Nation magazine](#), Eric Ross, an organizer, educator, and PhD candidate in the history department at the University of Massachusetts–Amherst, examines the history of U.S./Latin American [Abya Yala] relations and notes that they have been characterized by “immense profits for the few and violence, political upheaval, social dislocation, and economic devastation for the many.” He said that even though movements have challenged U.S. imperial ambitions, “these have repeatedly been forced back into the subordinate position assigned them in a global capitalist order designed to benefit their not so *good neighbor*.”

Ross goes on to examine three cases of U.S. intervention and the detrimental impacts they have had. They are:

- Cuba, where the 1901 Platt Amendment gave the U.S. “substantial control over the Cuban treasury and the ability to intervene whenever the United States deemed it necessary to safeguard its arbitrarily defined notion of what constituted *Cuban independence*.”
- Guatemala, where a 1954 coup, engineered by the United States at the behest of the United Fruit Company, thwarted a land reform program that would have helped millions of landless peasants. “The civil war that followed claimed more than 200,000 lives, including a genocidal campaign against the indigenous Ixil Maya people, carried out with direct U.S. support.”
- Chile, where the U.S. considered the 1970 election of socialist president Salvador Allende intolerable. “His program called for the nationalization of strategic industries, the expansion of healthcare and education, the strengthening of organized labor, and the dismantling of entrenched monopolistic landholdings.” President Richard Nixon and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger feared that

a “successful socialist state achieved through the ballot box risked demonstrating that another political and economic path was possible.”

Ross concludes by saying that “independent powers in this hemisphere going their own way were the threat that Washington and Wall Street could never tolerate. It’s the same reason the United States is once again maneuvering toward open conflict in Venezuela. To proceed down such a path will, of course, mean reenacting some of the most catastrophic chapters of U.S. foreign policy.”